

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-42 are presently active in this case, Claims 1, 2, 12, 13, 23, 24, and 34-36 having been amended and Claims 37-42 having been added by way of the present Amendment.

The amendments set forth herein do not raise any issues that have not been addressed previously. The amendments to Claims 1, 2, 12, 13, 23, and 24 place these claims into their original condition. Furthermore, new Claims 37-42 merely recite the subject matter currently being removed from Claims 1, 12, 23, 34-36, and therefore the subject matter of Claims 37-42 has been previously considered. Thus, the Applicant respectfully requests the entry of the amendments set forth herein.

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 12, 13, 15-19, 23, 24, 26-30, and 34-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Akihiro (JP 11-160775). Claims 3, 14, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Akihiro in view of Yokoda (U.S. Patent No. 5,892,996). Claims 9, 20, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Akihiro in view of Kohmo et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,557,574). For the reasons discussed below, the Applicant requests the withdrawal of the art rejections.

The Akihiro reference was published on June 18, 1999. The present application claims foreign priority to JP 11-082803, which was filed on March 26, 1999. A certified English language translation of JP 11-082803 is being filed concurrently herewith in order to perfect priority. Accordingly, the Akihiro reference is not prior art with respect to the present

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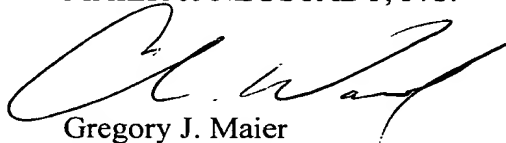
application. Thus, the Applicant respectfully requests the withdrawal of the art rejections, which are all based upon the citation of the Akihiro reference.

Claims 1, 2, 12, 13, 23, and 24 have been amended to place these claims into their original condition, since the Official Action dated November 19, 2003, also only contained art rejections that were based upon the citation of the Akihiro reference.

Consequently, in view of the above discussion, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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